



Human Rights Commission - Final Minutes

Date: Wednesday, December 20, 2023

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: 27 Maple Street, HHS Conference Room, 2nd Floor

Conducted by Hybrid (Remote and In-Person)

Attendees: Co-chairs Carney, Pusey. Commissioners Soneja, Key, Bauer, Grossman, S. Jones, Bryant, Horowitz

Absent: Comm. Beauchemin, G. Jones

APD: Capt Flynn

DEI: Jill Harvey

Community members: R. Gruber, M. Kappelstein

Agenda

1. Remote Meeting Notice and Land Acknowledgement
 - read by Co-Chair Carney
2. Review of November 2023 Meeting Minutes
 - accepted with minor corrections in the Outreach & Events section. Motion to accept with corrections by Comm Bauer, seconded by Comm Soneja. Passed unanimously
3. Incidents & Complaints & APD Updates
 - a. Commissioner Updates
 - no new incidents
 - Incident regarding Kidnapped signs being removed was closed after a series of emails were exchanged regarding this issue and concerns being on public property
 - Margaret Credle Thomas, DEI Director of APS reported a swastika in Brackett school and will talk with the principal about a school-wide response
 - a child on the Gibbs school bus was told they should've died in the Holocaust, Comm Pusey to communicate with the Gibbs school principal and spoke about the reporting protocol
 - b. APD
 - confirmed updates regarding the above fliers being removed from public property not constituting a crime
 - spoke about graffiti under the Alewife overpass being removed by Mass DOT

- attended a Menorah lighting event and & an AHA organized event organized by the Council of Aging
- 4 new officers to join in January including a female and PoC
- updates from Capt Flynn re the incident at AHS as he responded to the call from Dr Janger about mistaken identity and threat of a shooter in the school. Multiple officers responded, including one with an automatic rifle who was asked to stay isolated as school was in session while the incident was being investigated. Students were asked to speak with the SRO if there were any concerns, and no student approached the SRO

4. DEI Updates

- Language Access – Moving from Vasco to Pocket Talk hand-held translators. Offers more languages and tracking of the languages by each department, among other improvements. The pilot phase of the tool is wrapping up, and a recommendations report will be coming
- Upcoming Events
 - Jan. 15 – Dr. MLK Jr. 36th Annual Birthday Observance Celebration. If you want to volunteer- let Jill/Teresa know!
 - Jan. 25th – Lunar New Year Celebration. If you want to volunteer, let Teresa know! If you would like to table at this event, contact Comm. Bauer or Comm. Key
 - Tim is working with Recreation on the Menotomy Rocks Park & Parallel Park projects as well as with the Libraries on the Fox Library project to advocate ADA improvements
 - Disability Awareness event in March
 - Working on plans for a Know Your Rights Training for the community, with MCAD in early 2024

5. MAHRC Update Commissioner Soneja

Nov 17th meeting

- discussions re statements made by towns about the Israel-Gaza conflict. Multiple towns have made statements regarding Israel-Gaza
- Facilitated discussion on Israel-Gaza by Network for Social Justice
- Discussion about Human Rights day (12/10)
 - Breakfast in New Bedford (12/8) to recognize local champions. UN rep Rev Lee, who appeared in the summer at an MAHRC meeting, as the keynote speaker. Similar to the Cape- 75th-anniversary celebration, Barnstable County
- Discussion about public-facing role
 - Plans to create a steering committee. MAHRC should create this proactively.. If we can't comment on current affairs, then who can? Sen Lewis has asked for non-profit status
- Updates
 - Sarah Zeiburg (Sen Lewis's office) shared the state seal & motto committee report,
 - Community conversation on housing challenges, a panel discussion on youtube Forum by an author (Prof at Brandeis) about antisemitism & white supremacy on social media
 - New Bedford hosted ADL about combating hate & extremism, also hosted FBI rep to differentiate between a hate incident and hate crime
- Discussion about the use of the Nazi symbol and term and how it means different things to South Asian communities

December 8th meeting

- Corey & Jane Allen reparations presentation

A group working to end anti-Black racism formed after the murder of George Floyd - grappling with questions about what approach to take and decided to recognize the reports of the groups in Evanston IL and Amherst MA for their work in recognizing harms and working towards reparations

Towns don't explicitly mention redlining in their strategic planning documents, Arlington does not explicitly mention it either (as per Corey Allen who holds a w/s for white ppl dealing with racism with multiple attendees from Arlington)

Provide toolkit for analyzing data by discipline, home loan, arrests

Also made 2 presentations to NAACP, Mystic Valley which are viewable online

data town displays data about MA re home mortgages (DATA Town center for housing data)

- School discipline - black girls 4 times more likely than white girls

- Discussion about racial identification with traffic stops

6. Working Group Updates

a. Schools & Education

i. Discussion re breakdown in school reporting protocol, assigned Comm every month will be involved in school reporting

ii. Ottoson Day is to be held, similar event is being planned for Gibbs.

DEI issues at Gibbs were being addressed by Margaret Thomas

iii. Ongoing discussion re plans for Supdt Advisory Committee

iv. Video made by Schools & Ed for Ottoson civics day

v. New intern to begin in January

vi. Discussions about how to report school incidents

vii. No further action is to be taken regarding the misreported shooter at AHS

viii. More updates regarding the antisemitic incident at Brackett school

b. Outreach / Events

o MLK Birthday Observance January 15, 2024,

\$200 approved, volunteers sought for setup, no tabling

o 2024 Lunar New Year Celebration

Will require volunteers for setup from 1-6 PM. \$300 approved to be split between games, activities, and beverages. Motion to approve funding was made by Comm Bauer, seconded by Comm S Jones. All voted yes

o Day of Learning Update

to be held on 2/10, from 11-2 at AHS. The keynote speaker is the founder/CEO of Refuge Point, Sasha Chanoff. The conversation is to be about being a welcoming community.

c. Communications

did not meet since the last meeting

o Rapid Response Team - needs to be reconstituted

7. Co-Chairs Report

a. APD Meeting with Chief Flaherty: No updates other than those mentioned during APD updates.

- b. DEI Co-Chairs
New co-chairs for Rainbow and Disability Commissions, a discussion held about the new Supdt Advisory group
 - c. 2024 Monthly Incident Coverage - signups requested
 - d. Co-Chair for 2024 - a new co-chair sought for 2024. Comm Carney is to step down as co-chair,
 - e. Coffee Chat Sign-up - signups requested
- 8. Procedure for Statements (Commissioners Bauer & Horowitz)
 - Spoke about the types of statements made in the past: Advocacy - at local, state, and federal levels. Events: in town, state, within the country and internationally
 - Goals of statements are meant to be welcoming, bring people together, inform, support
 - Downsides: not timely, one way/impersonal communication, language can be mis-read, does not bring people together, Comm members lack expertise
 - Alternatives: focus on events to bring people together such as vigils, share statements by other organizations, outreach to organizations/institutions/house of worship to offer support
 - Proposal: limit statements to those re advocacy that concern Arlington, delegate to co-chairs the responsibility of calling for vigils, personal outreach to leaders, need a statement to explain the new approach
 - Discussions regarding this proposal about expertise (not all so-called experts are right as wars have been fought due to flawed analyses and statements that offer support require empathy more than expertise), sharing a statement by another group is fraught with the same issues
 - No vote was sought, the group will continue to work on firming up policies
- 9. Rise of and Responses to Anti-Semitism
 - a. Possible Suggestion: Community Conversation/How to Recognize and Respond/By-Stander-partner with ADL?
 - Facing History & Ourselves is a group to partner with, consider the audience, it could be comforting to hold an event
 - Proposal to speak about hate crimes & hate events and the need to make it obvious that it is all around us as anti-Jewish incidents are the most reported type of incidents in Arlington
 - Comm Bryant, S Jones & Carney to constitute a group to work on an event
- 10. Community Input
 - One attendee spoke about the MBTA Communities Act and the fact that their allegation to the Redevelopment Board about it being racist was dismissed.
- 11. Announcements
None
- 12. Next meeting – Wednesday, January 17, 2024
 - a. Incident Handling
 - December: Commissioner Horwitz
 - January: Comm Soneja
 - February:

13. Adjournment

Comm Bauer proposed, seconded by Comm Horowitz. unanimously approved

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 17, 2024, 8:00 pm, Remote Participation

Anyone needing accessibility information or assistance to attend this meeting should contact Tim Ross at tross@town.arlington.ma.us. This meeting is open to all interested individuals.